

**Talking Points for Aaron Stern  
Hand-Over of Core Permanent Shelters and  
Distribution of NFIs  
Barangay Gorong-Gorong, Nabua, Camarines Sur  
April 30, 2008  
8:30 a.m.**

Camarines Sur Governor L-Ray Villafuerte;  
Nabua Mayor Fernando Simbulan;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dios Marhay na Aga (Good morning)!

- This is my first time in the Bicol Region. Actually, this is my first visit outside of Metro Manila since I just arrived in March from Washington. I am very thankful to have the Philippines as my first overseas assignment with USAID - it is really a great pleasure to be here.
- I am honored to take part in the hand-over of the newly-built houses and distribute basic household items for families displaced by the flooding in this barangay that was caused by super Typhoon Reming in late 2006.
- This event is an important milestone for the 41 families who will be occupying the new houses. You've been in limbo for a long time and we hope you can now start your lives anew.
- I work for the United States Government, specifically for the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID. USAID is the principal agency of the U.S. Government that administers U.S. foreign assistance

including disaster relief. One of my most important roles in the USAID Mission in the Philippines is to serve as "Mission Disaster Relief Officer" - I am responsible for helping coordinate U.S. disaster relief assistance to the Philippines.

- I am here today on behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people who have supported the relief efforts here in the Bicol Region. On their behalf, I want to convey my deepest sympathy to those of you who suffered the loss of loved ones, homes, and livelihoods.
- The United States joined many nations around the world offering support to the survivors of super Typhoon Reming disaster. Through USAID, we quickly provided cash and in-kind assistance to the victims of floods and mudslides.
- But, we all know that the road to recovery is long and hard. On May 25, 2007, President Bush signed an appropriations law, which includes \$5 million specifically for typhoon recovery assistance for the Philippines. The request for funds was authored by Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a long-time friend of the Philippines.
- The \$5 million is supporting a number of integrated interventions to help families in the provinces of Albay and Camarines Sur through USAID grants to Save the Children and International Organization for Migration (or IOM).
- IOM is constructing about 900 homes and a maximum of five multi-purpose community centers with water and sanitation facilities in

Guinobatan and Camalig both in Albay; and in the municipalities of Baao, Buhi and Nabua in Camarines Sur.

- Here in Nabua, IOM has completed 41 new homes, which we will hand-over today to 41 families.
- Save the Children will provide basic household commodities to 8,000 families throughout the region. The grant will also support the rehabilitation of livelihoods to help families have a secure supply of food and incomes. Save the Children is also increasing awareness and participation of local governmental units, public elementary schools, children and communities in disaster risk reduction.
- Through the Save the Children grant, 231 families in this municipality, including those who will be awarded the 41 houses today, will receive basic household items [such as thermoses, rice pots, frying pans, mosquito nets, blankets, plastic mats, flashlights and hygiene kits]. Furthermore, Save the Children will provide training and inputs for small scale livelihood activities [such as hog raising, poultry production and vegetable farming]. It will also conduct capacity building on disaster preparedness.
- I want to congratulate everyone here today on helping to make this new beginning possible, and I applaud your resilience and courage. This occasion represents the best of the Filipino tradition of community spirit and mutual help, or "Bayanihan" - that I have already heard so much about even in my short time here - it has been a coordinated effort involving many people and organizations.

- I want to emphasize how much we appreciate the partnership of the Provincial and Local Governments, headed by Gov. Villafuerte, who are very committed to making a better life for all Bicolanos; the staff of IOM and Save the Children; and the people of Nabua. We can provide assistance in cash and in-kind, and give talks - but it would all mean little without dedicated people on the ground who bring help directly to people in need and the hope, resourcefulness, and resilience of those affected by the disaster.
- On behalf of USAID and the American People, I congratulate you on the success of this very special project. This effort will surely make the province a safer and more secure place to live and work. And I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the community for your warm welcome today.
- Let me wish the best for each of you.

Dios mabalos.